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"Americas 2004" by Rosa M.

Virgin Image Exhibits and Conferences History

By Dr. Jennifer Colby
Edited by Darlene Boyd

This year Galeria Tonantzitlan will be producing the annual "Images of the Virgin" exhibit and conference. The tradition began in the gallery's first year 1992 in its Plaza Market location. The name Tonantzitlan means "Our Mother." The Virgin de Tepeyac play in the mission, and devotion by founding artists inspired the theme. The uniqueness of the exhibition was the invitation to women artists to send artwork that broadly expressed the sacred female. Of course, the Virgin of Guadalupe would be a central figure in the exhibits and conferences, but many other versions of Mary and other mother figures from many cultures have been expressed through contemporary art. The first exhibit was not juried and the little space was packed. Consuelo Underwood, professor at San Jose State juried the second exhibit. By the third year the gallery moved to its present location, the Vache Adobe at 115- 3rd Street. The following history was recorded in Jennifer Colby's dissertation (2001).

In 1994 the third annual *Images of the Virgin* exhibit was enriched by the first *Virgin Image Conference*. Yolanda Lopez was the juror of the exhibit that year and the keynote speaker at the conference. Yolanda opened our eyes to the complexities of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a Mexican cultural image. The panelists included artist Rose Buffalo, Ann Marie Sayers, a local Mutsun Native, and artist-scholar Jennifer Colby. The conference took place at Jardines Restaurant and the conference room of the La Posada Hotel. More than 30 women attended. We had mugs for sale made from our favorite art piece in the exhibit. Attending the *Virgen de Tepeyac* play was the highlight of the conference, which Yolanda and her son and the other participants truly appreciated.

The next year, 1995, Neva Vasquez and Jennifer juried the exhibit and Jennifer organized a retrospective of the Virgin exhibits and a conference in Berkeley at the Badè Museum where she worked as a curator. The exhibit brought together the best of the four years of *Images of the Virgin* by women artists to the religious context of the Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). The conference brought together the trio of Lucia Birnbaum, Elinor Gadon and Yolanda Lopez. Elinor explored why women were creating self-portraits as the Virgin, Yolanda provided an informative background on Guadalupe and Chicana art responses. Lucia introduced the Black Madonna. This conference was a critical point for making a bridge between looking at European Black Madonnas and Guadalupe.

The following year Elinor Gadon was the juror of the 5th annual exhibit in 1996. The *Virgin* play which is offered every other year was in cycle and we had the third conference with presenters Elinor, Rebecca Salome Shaw and responses by Carmen Leon and Chicana film expert Carmen Huaco - Nuzum. Rebecca's contribution from her studies in religious history at the GTU expanded our understanding of the history of Guadalupe in Spain and the myriad of stories about her apparition and relationship with Meso-American goddesses.

The next year Patricia Rodriguez, lecturer at the CSU Monterey Bay Visual and Public Arts Institute was the juror of the exhibit. She joined Rebecca and Elinor as speakers at the fourth conference. This conference included a small group discussion with Elinor and local Native American activist Eleyna Reyna at *Arboleda*, the retreat center where some of the conference participants stayed. (Photograph, 1997).

The fifth conference and seventh exhibit in 1998 was the most ambitious, planned for three days including December 12th the Guadalupe's feast day. Artist Rosa M. who had participated in several of the exhibits helped Jennifer Colby to find more scholars to invite as participants. Maria Herrera - Sobek, director of Chicano Studies at UC Santa Barbara was juror of the exhibition and key-note speaker. Inez Talamandez, Native American scholar at UC Santa Barbara's Religious Studies program also presented. These dynamic women were joined by Elinor Gadon, Lucia Birnbaum, Rebecca Salome-Shaw, Charlene Spretnak from the California Institute of Integral Studies, Margarita Zires from Mexico City, Sonja Giles, Native American and GTU PhD. Candidate in Ethics, Chicana poet Cindy Williams-Gutierrez and artists Rosa M. and Yolanda Lopez. Jennifer added to the juried exhibit an invitational exhibition in the Garden Gallery to include these artists and others doing important works on the Virgin. They were able to attend the Teatro Campesino play and continue discussions at the hotel. We also added to the conference a pilgrimage to the tree in Watsonville, where there had been an apparition of the Virgin de Guadalupe. Jennifer also shared her own presentation given that November at the American Academy of Religion. Lucia, Elinor and Jennifer had presented at the Women's Caucus panel on the *Dark Mother* at the 1998 American Academy of Religion in Orlando, Florida.

The 1999 exhibition was juried by Charlene Spretnak. The conference was only one day and featured Jennifer's AAR presentation and the film *Flowers for* See *VIRGIN*, page 10

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Arts



Artist Alejandra Alsegura with her interpretation image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Virgin

Continued from page 8

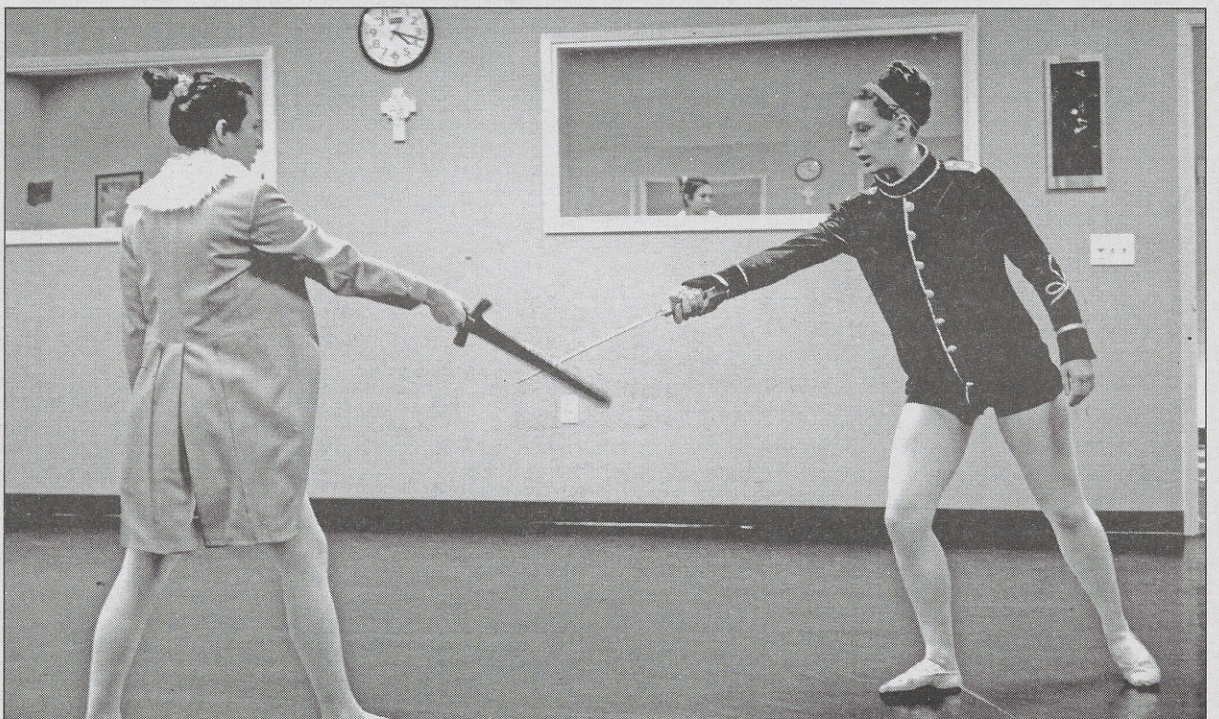
Guadalupe. (Gleason 1998) Artists Elizabeth Williams and María Alquilar presented their artwork.

The 9th annual exhibition in the year 2000 was juried by Amalia Mesa-Baines, director of the Visual and Public Arts Institute at CSU Monterey Bay. She joined Lucia Birnbaum, Rosa M., Ann Marie Sayers, and author China Galland as presenters in the 7th annual conference. This conference opened with the Guadalupe dialogue, a discussion among the artists interviewed in Jennifer's dissertation and the forty women who attended the conference. The historic atmosphere of San Juan Bautista and the many excellent restaurants provide a perfect place for the gallery and conferences. During the conferences, participants have used many of the restaurants and old buildings, including the Native Daughter's Adobe and the bottom of the Masonic Lodge. The three days in San Juan are filled with walks between the buildings and the mission. When the Mission restored a small chapel off the garden it moved their picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe there and dedicated the chapel to her. In 1997 we visited the chapel during the conference and in 1998 we had permission to read the *Nican Mopohua*, the text of Guadalupe's appearance, and also Charlene Spretnak's poem *Mary at the Millennium* in the Chapel. Every even numbered year participants in the conference have enjoyed the *Virgin de Tepeyac* play. On the odd numbered years *La Pastorela*, another play by *El Teatro Campesino*, is an option. These theater productions are passion plays performed lovingly by local community members.

After gallery owner Jennifer Colby published her dissertation on the content of these conferences the exhibits and conferences continued with new and repeating jurors including artist Amalia Mesa-Baines, artist Yolanda Lopez, Director of the UCSC Women's Center, Roberta Valdez, Bay Area Curator, Tricia Grame, UCSC Professor and Jennifer Gonzalez. The exhibits and conferences continued to attract audiences interested in the displays of the creativity and spirituality of women artists. Drawn to the sacred female images, the exploration of the Virgin through history and in contemporary society touched on issues of female empowerment and deepening women's roles in social justice. For twenty years this opportunity to express the deeper meaning of Tonantzin - "Our Mother" - has been a great blessing and an honor for the gallery. Over the past nine years co-director Janet Martinez and her husband Ed have added a new dimension of hospitality to the conference and exhibit receptions. Women and men have been drawn to San Juan Bautista to celebrate the power of these images in visual art and in theatre, and they have had food and drink in our gallery provided by our local restaurants, with music by local musicians. The participants to our exhibits and conferences have had a multi-dimensional experience.

This year will be the last "Images of the Virgin" exhibit in the Vache Adobe - on display until January 12. The reception is December 8 from 5 - 7 p.m. and is open to the public. Our juror Socorro Castañeda-Liles, Ph.D. Professor of Religion at Santa Clara University, and Author China Galland will be featured speakers at our conference. This year is our first (and hopefully not last) conference at the Saint Francis retreat center. Please call 623-2783 to reserve your stay for the entire weekend December 7, 8, 9 or to join us for the day only.

You can keep in touch with upcoming developments for Galeria Tonantzin at www.galeriatonantzin.com. ■



The Dance Advantage – Secrets of the Nutcracker

By Zoe and Annaliese Hunter

Happy Holidays from the San Benito Dance Academy! We are going full speed ahead for "The Nutcracker." In the four shows on December 15 - 16, we have many new surprises in store for you! We are sorry, but we can't tell you the "Secrets of *The Nutcracker*", YOU will need to find out for yourself.

Recently, we participated in the Lights on Parades in Hollister and Salinas. The one in Salinas was 1 mile long. Those poor mice and soldiers walking so far!! This year Clara and the brave Nutcracker rode a beautiful red convertible from the 60s, while the mice and soldiers marched behind. There were two party girls who carried the sign. Pssst! They were us.

We have a few more rehearsals to polish things up. It is exciting that it is so close to "show time," but we think we might miss it too. They say in show business that, "it's a grief and relief" when the show is completed. We wonder how we will feel. We think that we will always treasure this experience. Once a person has performed in "The Nutcracker" they can never hear the music the same way. They hear the tune and see the dancers performing. What is nice for us is that the dancers are our friends. So, we will have memories for a life time.

So, if you would like to have the memory with us, come and see it. For show info or to buy tickets, come see us at San Benito Dance Academy or purchase online at sanbenitodanceacademy.com. ■



PHOTO OP

Where is the Star?

John Hopper at the Austin, Texas airport baggage claim.

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Arts

Holiday ARTs – December 2012

Galeria Tonantzin's co-owners Janet Martinez and Jennifer Colby regret to inform their artists and supporters that they have lost their lease and will close their doors as of January 21, 2012. Therefore they heartily invite the public to their 21st season of "Images of the Virgin" and last exhibit in the Vache Adobe. On December 8, 15 and 16 they will hold a "blow out" sale, which includes their jewelry and pottery. On January 12 they will go out in a flourish of "Flor y Canto" song and poetry and live auction, followed by their final reception.

The Galeria will be launching their on-line gallery in March 2012 and plan to continue women's contemporary art exhibits in other venues with the Monterey Bay Women's Caucus for Art as their nonprofit partner. Please keep in touch through their website, www.galeriatonantzin.com, and they thank you for 20 1/2 years of continuous support for their beautiful adventure.

We also are sad to report that Gene Oliver Gallery closed their doors at the end of fall, and have decided to settle in San Francisco.

Aromas Hills Artisans is celebrating the holiday season with style and creativity. Their next meeting is on Dec. 5, which is a Holiday Parteeeee! They are asking participants to bring some delectable food for the potluck, which starts at 6:30 p.m. They are also holding a fun gift exchange. One brings a gift of one's own art (valued around \$30), to play an exchange game.

Author Joyce Oroz reminds us that it is only natural that Barbara Scoles is our "Dragonfly Gallery Artist of the Month" for December, even though we love and admire her Santas all year round. Barb and I grew up together in the woodsy San Lorenzo Valley. Who knew that she would one day turn trees into Santas and green men? Here is Barbara in her own words: "I have been carving for over 15 years and showing my work at woodcarving shows and galleries for the past six years. I have always loved Santa and my goal is to combine a loving face and wonderful beard with a rich gown or costume. The animals that gather by Santa and his gifts reflect his loving and whimsical nature. Each piece takes about 40 to 60 hours. The primary wood I use is Basswood from the Linden tree and the paint is acrylic. Once the drawing is done, the real work starts. This is great fun to have chips flying and the Santa personality taking shape in solid form. The wood is band sawed to the proper size and then the large chisels and mallets come into play. This is time-consuming and hard work. I am usually able to complete the entire piece out of a single piece of wood, and hide things in the carving for people to find later. My husband has become involved with Sea Otters in the Monterey Bay. He has become an expert as he studies, photographs, and talks about the otters. It seemed natural that I would start adding them to my Santas. I love the result. I love to create custom pieces, contemplate how to make the Santa special. It is such fun to see someone discover their personal dog or cat. I am working on a Santa now that has three cats, a hedgehog, a train, a landscape and quilt pieces. It is fun to have someone suggest something I had not thought of before. Think about what would be with your Santa. My favorite comment is when people say they never put their Santas away after the holidays. They become a part of the family and their home. My pieces are in private collections throughout the U.S. and Canada. I love the 'Green man'. He is the original gift giver as he brought spring. He is one of the most frequently recurring and beautiful motifs of medieval art. Also known as God of the Woodlands, some think he represents the spirit of the trees and the green and growing things of the earth. Common among the oldest churches and cathedrals in Europe he is also referred to as the foliated mask."

Barbara is a true master of her craft. She researches, designs, carves and paints beautiful Santas — each one uniquely dressed, bearing gifts such as kittens, puppies, otters, birds, bears and toys. Scoles invites you to visit the Dragonfly Gallery, 389 Blohm in Aromas, where you can see her creations on display, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, 10:00 to 4:00. The gallery will be open Fridays from



Barbara Scoles & Santa



Grandmother Spirit by Carmen Leon

The ARTs Salon

By Darlene Boyd



1:00 to 6:00 until December 21st for your shopping convenience.

San Benito Stage Company's upcoming auditions for SPAMALOT are here. SBSC is fortunate to be one of the first community theatre companies in the area to produce SPAMALOT since it has been on a highly successful national tour. This show is "Lovingly ripped off from the classic film comedy *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*," and retells the legend of King Arthur and

his Knights of the Round Table, featuring a bevy of beau-

tiful show girls, not to mention cows, killer rabbits, and French people. Did we mention the bevy of beautiful show girls?" The book & lyrics are written by Eric Idle and the music was composed by John Du Prez and Eric Idle. Auditions are being held on Dec 6, 7 & 8, for ages 18 and up. Their casting needs are a minimum of 13 men and 8 women. On Dec 6, 7, 2012 check in begins at 6 pm. and auditions begin promptly @ 6:30 pm. On December 8 check in begins at 9:30 am and auditions begin promptly @ 10am. Be prepared to sing one to two verses of a song. Bring sheet music or music only cd. You may be asked to read from the script. You may also bring a short prepared monologue. Report to the Granada Theater, 336 5th St. Hollister. The show dates are Feb 15 - March 2, 2013. For more information contact SBSC at 831-636-0122 or www.sanbenitostage.org.

They also have an exciting season planned for 2012, starting off with Spamalot and continuing with Treasure Island, a spring youth musical for ages 8 to 8th grade. Auditions for this performance are in February of 2012. Later there will be Shrek, a summer family musical for ages 8 and up with auditions in late April of 2013.

A Holiday Arts and Crafts Boutique is being held by the San Benito County Arts Council at the Blak Sage Gallery. They have a variety of locally made arts, crafts, cards and gifts, with prices starting at just \$2 for cards and \$10 for fused glass earrings.

Featured work includes jewelry by Kay Walters, pottery by Jane Rekedal & Kent Child, landscape paintings by Carole Belliveau, Darlene Boyd & Shannon Grissom, illustrated cards and children's books by Kathleen Sheridan, and much, much more. Give something unique and meaningful during this holiday season and consider giving a work of art! They also have a very generous donation by one of their board members, a special collection of newer and vintage Christopher Radko ornaments on sale at the Blak Sage Gallery from November 24 to December 15. All proceeds benefit the arts in San Benito County. If you are a collector or simply love the holidays, you will definitely want to see this unique collection! For questions, please contact the SBCAC at 636.2787 or info@sanbenitoarts.org. ■



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For more information, contact the Community Foundation for San Benito County at 831-630-1924, or visit our website at www.cffsbc.org



Community Foundation

FOR SAN BENITO COUNTY

All of us here at the Community Foundation wish you a healthy and happy holiday season!